Researching and improving the effectiveness of ethics training

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Abstract

This chapter starts out with a review of existing evaluation research on ethics training. This not only generates some useful insights but also reveals some important methodological and theoretical problems. As for the latter, specifications of the main variables are often vague, resulting in equally vague hypotheses, difficult to falsify or corroborate. The chapter hopes to address these concerns by proposing a conceptualization of both the independent variable, 'ethics training', and dependent variable, 'ethical competence'. These could constitute the main building blocks for a conceptual framework that can be used for cumulative evaluation research of very different ethics training programs with various training objectives.

Introduction

Ethics training certainly has been one of the most popular instruments of integrity management in organizations. Likewise, in many professional educational programs, ethics courses are taught to prepare students for real life professional ethical decision making (Ritter, 2006; Menzel, 1997; Delaney & Sockell, 1992). In spite of (or perhaps because of) all this enthusiasm, genuine evaluation research of these courses has been scarce (Van Montfort, Beck, & Twijnstra, 2013; Yoder & Denhart, 2001). Those studies that do exist generate conflicting findings. Weber (1990, p. 183) attributes these mixed results to differences in the measurement instruments, methods of data analysis, and research populations. At the same time, there is also significant conceptual confusion. There are substantial differences in the types of training evaluated and there is no agreed upon conceptual framework to specify these differences. Moreover, the outputs and the outcomes that are measured differ substantially. As a result, hypotheses about the impact of training on those outputs and outcomes are often difficult to falsify or corroborate. This chapter first briefly reviews the empirical literature on the

effectiveness of ethics training and then proposes a conceptualization of both ethics training and its expected outcomes.

The effectiveness of ethics training in professional context

Before considering the effectiveness of ethics training, it is important to address the often implicit assumption behind it: that it is at all possible to teach ethics in a professional context. While several authors suggest that this is an unsettled debate (Ritter, 2006; Yoder & Denhart, 2001; Adams, Tashchian, & Shore, 1999; Cragg, 1997), our review of the academic literature did not identify strongly pronounced proponents nor opponents. Most consulted authors agree that, while character development and value internalization can be considered completed in adulthood (Campbell, Chin, & Voo, 2007; Williams & Dewett, 2005; Cragg, 1997), professional education and training are still good occasions to develop one's own vision about professional ethical issues (e.g. Parks (1993) in Adams et al. (1999)). This nuanced view is reflected in recommendations about both the training's target audience and its objective. First, many seem to assume that ethics training is only valuable for people already inclined to take ethics seriously (Cragg, 1997). Second, although ethics training by itself is not strong enough to change deeply rooted ethical values, it is able to make participants more competent in dealing with the ethical dimensions of the professional environment they (will) work in. Typically, ethics training would then contain discussions of the organization's or profession's normative framework as well as exercises in practical ethical decision making (Ritter, 2006; Maesschalck, 2005; Adams et al., 1999).

Having thus delineated the target audience and the objectives, we can now turn to findings concerning the effectiveness of ethics training. An obvious first stop for such findings is Waples et al's (2008) meta-analysis of 25 studies on the effectiveness of business ethics instruction for college students and professionals. While generally concluding that business ethics training is "at best minimally effective in enhancing ethics among students and business people" (p.146), they also point at some moderators that were found to increase effectiveness. For example, courses that are "shorter in length (i.e., span no more than 30 days time in total), and delivered in the mold of a weekend seminar/workshop format

are, for the most part, more effective" (p. 147). As for the actual instruction, they concluded that the case-based approach and the combination of multiple teaching activities increase effectiveness. They also observed the effectiveness of "instructional programs designed to foster critical thought processes, geared toward understanding of the problem at hand – in the appropriate context - and then dissecting the thought and behavior process leading to the resolution of the problem" (147). While this meta-analysis thus offers useful conclusions, its authors also point at some limitations. The analysis was hindered by the vagueness in many studies about the training goals and by the limited information in many studies about the contents of the training. For those reasons, their analysis is inevitably limited to very general conclusions. This chapter will, instead, focus on a number of specific studies, not only in the private, but also in the public sector, using them to explore and illustrate the theoretical framework we propose. We will now introduce these studies organized around three often used research designs.[1]

A first frequently used research design for the evaluation of ethics training is the comparison between participants and non-participants. In these studies, professionals are asked whether they were taught ethics during a degree program (e.g. master of business administration, master of public administration) and/or in other professional training (e.g. company training). Those who were, even if it had been many years ago, are then compared with those who were not. In several studies, differences between both groups in moral attitudes and cognitive moral development are found and attributed to the ethics training (Luthar, Dibattista, & Gautschi, 1997; Green & Weber, 1997; Delaney & Sockell, 1992). Yet, Peppas and Diskin (2001) find no significant differences, while Sparks and Hunt (1998) and Lowry (2003) find negative effects on participants' moral sensitivity.

In the second research design respondents who once participated in an ethics training are asked to indicate to what extent they believe the training affected them. Again, they might have followed the training many years before the study. Respondents of Eynon and colleagues (1997) are rather positive, while those of Menzel (1997) are rather negative. While these studies offer valuable insights, their use

[1] The literature discussed in the remainder of this section is mainly drawn from De Schrijver (2014, pp. 52-55).

in evaluating ethics training is limited, because various types of ethics training are addressed within one study.

More useful for the evaluation of ethics training are those designs where one type of training is evaluated through a pretest-posttest design (often with experimental and control group). Several studies show a positive effect of the ethics training on participants' moral sensitivity (Wu, 2003; Myyry & Helkama, 2002; Gautschi & Jones, 1998), moral reasoning (O'Leary, 2009; Loe & Weeks, 2000; Glenn, 1992; Schlaefi, Rest, & Thoma, 1985), moral values (Wu, 2003; Weber & Glyptis, 2000), cognitive flexibility (Carlson & Burke, 1998) and autonomous problem solving (Kavathatzopoulos, 1994). However, other studies using this same design could not find any effect on participants' ethical orientation (DeMoss & McCann, 1997) and moral attitudes (Wynd & Mager, 1989). Yet other studies report mixed results. Van Montfort and colleagues (2013) only find a short term positive effect of one of two studied ethics training types on participants' moral sensitivity and moral reasoning. The other type of training they investigated had no impact. Richards (1999) also reports only short term effects. In her study, Ritter (2006) only found a positive effect of the evaluated ethics training on female participants, while Abdolmohammadi and Reeves (2000) obtained the opposite result: only a positive effect on male participants. Nguyen and colleagues (2008) only observed progress in participants' ethical perceptions in one of the three studied dilemmas.

The literature on ethics training is not only diverse in terms of methodology, there is also significant conceptual variation. The independent variable, ethics training, is undertheorized. While the actual contents of the studied trainings differ substantially across the studies, the literature offers no agreed upon conceptual framework to specify these differences. Likewise, the conceptualization of the dependent variable also has its problems. Authors are not always clear about the objectives of the ethics training, which results in various conceptualizations of the dependent variable in evaluation studies. Examples of objectives used in the literature include transferring knowledge about the organization's code of ethics (Carlson & Burke, 1998), introducing moral philosophical theories and values (Carlson & Burke, 1998; Strong & Hoffman, 1990), raising awareness and sensitivity for ethical issues (Carlson & Burke, 1998; Loeb, 1991; Sims & Sims, 1991; Strong & Hoffman, 1990),

strengthening analytical and critical ethical decision making skills (Carlson & Burke, 1998; Kavathatzopoulos, 1994; Loeb, 1991; Sims & Sims, 1991; Strong & Hoffman, 1990), raising awareness for consequences for others (Weber, 2007), stimulating moral imagination (Carlson & Burke, 1998; Menzel, 1997), and showing participants how to deal with ambiguity and different opinions (Carlson & Burke, 1998; Loeb, 1991).

In sum, some problems in the existing literature on ethics training have to do with measurement difficulties, but many can be ascribed to the limited degree of theorizing on the topic. Specifications of the independent variable (ethics training) and dependent variable (intended effects) are often vague, resulting in equally vague hypotheses, difficult to falsify or corroborate. The following section hopes to address these theoretical concerns by proposing a conceptualization of both the independent and the dependent variables that is broad enough to encompass various types of training and of training effects, but still specific enough to allow for clear conceptualizations and falsifiable hypotheses.

The dependent variable: ethical competence

As illustrated above, the literature offers various objectives of ethics training that could serve as dependent variables in evaluation studies, but no overall framework that could be used across studies. In search for such a general framework, it is useful to look beyond ethics training at the broader literature on training evaluation. Probably the most widely used framework in that literature is the 'four-level evaluation model' of Kirkpatrick (1959, 1994). While often presented as a general evaluation model, it is in fact better characterized as a "taxonomy of outcomes" (Holton 1996: 5) and hence a way of operationalizing the dependent variable of training evaluation. Although widely used, Kirkpatrick's model has also been criticized and adapted versions have been proposed (e.g. Holton 1996, Alliger et al 1997, Alvarez et al 2004). We first briefly present Kirkpatrick's model, taking on board some of those more recent insights. We then then turn to our operationalization of the dependent variable 'ethical competence', i.e. the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) of an ethically competent employee (De Schrijver & Maesschalck, 2013, p. 36).

Kirkpatrick distinguishes between what he calls four 'levels', but would probably better be described as four (types of) dependent variables: reactions, learning, behavior and results. We briefly address each in turn. 'Reactions' are the trainees' immediate responses to the training. Alliger et al (1997: 344-345) distinguish between affective reactions and utility reactions. Interestingly, their meta-analysis showed that affective reactions did not have any impact upon learning: it is not because trainees like the training that they also learn (Alliger et al 1997). It did show an impact of the utilitarian reactions: when trainees reported that they found the training useful and relevant to their job, they were indeed more likely to learn. The second level, 'learning', refers to knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) acquired as a consequence of the training. Various other taxonomies, sometimes more complicated than the KSA-triad, have been used. Alvarez et al (2004: 395-397), for example, made a threefold distinction that significantly differs from the traditional KSA-triad: posttraining attitudes (e.g. adopting the attitudes intended by the training, strengthening motivation, strengthening organizational commitment), cognitive learning (e.g. acquisition of knowledge, situated problem solving) and training performance (i.e. the ability to perform a newly acquired skills at the end of training). Kirkpatrick's third level was originally termed 'behavior', but more recent models use other terms. Alvarez et al. (2004: 397) use 'transfer performance', thus emphasizing that this third level only refers to performance/behavior on the job. They situate behavior exhibited during the training ('training performance') in level two. Thus, 'transfer performance' is about the transfer of acquired KSAs to actual daily life on the job. In the context of ethics training, this would e.g. mean that ethical reasoning skills are actually used on the job in real-life dilemmas or that employees know and apply the contents of the ethics code in daily practice. The fourth dependent variable 'results' refers to the achievement of the final outcomes of the training. In the case of sales training these could be increased sales. In the context of ethics training, these could mean that the organization better deals with ethical dilemmas or that clients indeed perceive the organization as more ethical.

Returning to ethics training, it is clear that an extensive development of all four levels would be beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, we focus on the level that we think would be most useful to understand given the current state of the research: level two, 'learning'. The first level (reactions) is

relatively easy to conceptualize. Indeed, many studies already report on the extent to which participants liked the ethics training and whether they found it useful, and the interpretation of these results is usually fairly straightforward. That is very different for the second level, which could certainly use a more theorized classification of the many ways in which this level is operationalized. Moreover, several models (e.g. Alvarez et al. 2004) hypothesize that 'learning' is an intermediary variable that in turn (partly) impacts behavior on the job ('transfer performance') and results. Any research agenda investigating the causal chain from 'learning' over performance to results, will therefore have to start with an operationalization of 'learning'.

Now we can turn to the actual conceptualization of 'ethical competence'. Drawing from the literature on administrative and business ethics, De Schrijver and Maesschalck (2013) argue that ethical competence should not be considered a one-dimensional concept, but instead consists of 12 components. Table 1 represents these in twelve cells, defined by two dimensions. The columns refer respectively to knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSAs) that ethics training might aim to impact. The rows refer to four subcompetencies. Inspiration for these subcompetencies was drawn from Rest's (1986) Four Component Model that identifies four processes preceding ethical behavior: moral awareness, moral judgment, moral motivation and moral character. As table 1 below shows, this list was complemented by the subcompetence 'rule abidance' because legality is an important value in public administration. Also, 'moral motivation' and 'moral character' were merged because Rest's (1986) conceptualization of moral motivation refers only to a skill and that of moral character only to an attitude.

*** INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE***

We discuss each of the respective KSAs of each of the four subcompetencies.[2]

The first subcompetence is 'rule abidance'. As for knowledge, an ethically competent employee should know the rules, procedural guidelines and code(s) of ethics that are applicable to her (cell 1).

[2] This description of the framework strongly draws from De Schrijver (2014, p. 41) and De Schrijver and Maesschalck (2013, p. 42).

Knowing is not enough, however. She should also have the skill to apply them in specific situations (cell 2). Yet, knowledge and skill are only relevant when there is a genuine willingness to apply them. That is what cell 3 refers to: a positive attitude towards rules. The second subcompetence is 'moral sensitivity', which refers to a sensitivity for ethical issues. In terms of knowledge, this means that a public servant should understand her position in both society and her organization or profession as well the responsibilities implied by that position (cell 4). A police officer, for example, should be aware of her exemplary function. Cell 5 refers to the skill not only to sense when a moral dilemma is at stake, but also to think of possible solutions and to understand their possible consequences in the short- and long-term. However, those skills can only be applied if the ethically competent employee has the ability to empathize and take the perspective of others, as depicted in cell 6. The third subcompetence 'moral reasoning' again has knowledge, skill, and attitude components. As for knowledge, cell 7 indicates that an ethically competent employee must be familiar with three different types of moral arguments: (1) arguments that refer to rules and procedures, (2) arguments that refer to consequences of actions for others, and (3) arguments that refer to consequences of actions for oneself. Cell 8 then refers to the skill to actually use these arguments in a specific moral dilemma. Yet, knowledge and skill are only useful if they are supported by a matching attitude (cell 9): flexibility or 'the willingness to accept that there is never only one solution for a problem' (De Schrijver & Maesschalck, 2013, p. 40). 'Moral motivation and character' is the fourth subcompetence. As for knowledge, it implies an understanding that, among the three types of moral arguments, those referring to rules and consequences for others should be considered more important that the egoistic considerations (cell 10). Cell 11 then refers to the actual skill of doing that and cell 12 refers to attitudinal aspects necessary for that: autonomy and ego-strength. Autonomy refers to the ability to make a decision independently from others' expectations and judgments, while ego-strength refers to the moral courage needed when making a difficult decision (De Schrijver & Maesschalck, 2013).

Admittedly, the resulting framework with 12 cells based on 2 dimensions is complex. Yet, as De Schrijver and Maesschalck (2013) show, this reflects complexity in the literature. Moreover, De Schrijver's (2014) study offers empirical support for the need for such complexity. Her longitudinal

study among trainee police officers in Belgium not only confirmed the existence of 12 separate dimensions, it also showed that patterns over time on these dimensions diverge significantly, with some dimensions increasing, some decreasing and some remaining constant. Hence, we would argue that these 12 cells of ethical competence can be used as a map of objectives an ethics training can hope to achieve. A training could aim to affect only one cell. For example, a traditional lecture on the ethics code might be limited to impacting cell 1. It could also aim at improving specific rows or columns. A training in ethical decision making, for example, might focus on the skills column. Perhaps it could even be more ambitious, aiming at more than one column or row.

It is interesting now to use this framework to conceptualize and compare the stated objectives of the training programs studied in the pretest-posttest evaluation studies mentioned above. Many of the training programs in those studies seem to focus on skills, i.e. the middle column in table 1. The training evaluated by Van Montfort et al. (2013) and the one evaluated by Kavathatzopoulos (1994) indeed focus on the skills specified in cells 5 (seeing different solutions), cell 8 (using different moral arguments) and cell 11 (giving priority to rules and consequences). The training studied by Ritter (2006) aimed at impacting those same three cells by improving participants' cognitive competence. In addition to that, it also aimed at improving participants' moral understanding, which in our framework would be the knowledge component of the second subcompetence (cell 4). The training studied by Myyry and Helkama (2002) aims at the same four objectives as Rigger (2006): cells 4, 5, 8 and 11. In other studies the stated objectives of the training are less clear (e.g. Wu, 2003; Loe & Weeks, 2000; Richards, 1999; Carlson & Burke, 1998; Gautschi & Jones, 1998; Wynd & Mager, 1989). Interestingly, those stated objectives of the training programs did not always coincide with the actual dependent variables that were measured in the empirical study. For example, from the four objectives Ritter (2006) describes, only two are actually measured as dependent variables: moral sensitivity (cell 5) and moral reasoning (cell 8).

The independent variable: types of ethics training

A conceptual framework for the evaluation of ethics training of course also needs a nuanced operationalization of its main independent variable. A brief look at the practice-oriented literature reveals a very broad range of types of ethics training thus rendering it very difficult for trainers to make an informed choice and for researchers to develop a cumulative understanding of what works. Unfortunately, the academic literature is also of limited use in this respect. Many studies are not very specific on the contents of the ethics training and those studies that are, are often difficult to compare. Hence, if the aim is to develop a cumulative research agenda that provides really useful information, a framework will be necessary that is generic but still sufficiently specific as well. The first step towards such a framework will be to identify the dimensions along which these types of training vary.

One such dimension is drawn from the well-known rules-based vs. values based (or compliance vs. integrity) distinction for ethics management more generally (Paine 1994; Maesschalck 2005). The 'rules-based' approach emphasizes the importance of formal and detailed rules and procedures and assumes that individual employees need extrinsic pressure to behave ethically. A typical format for a rules-based integrity training would be a classroom setting where the trainer would be talking most of the time, explaining what is expected from the organizational members according to the laws, rules and codes and what the consequences will be if one does not follow these directions. The 'values-based' approach focuses on guidance and positive incentives, assuming that individual employees are intrinsically motivated to behave ethically. A case in point would be a training in which the trainees do most of the thinking and talking and the trainer is merely a facilitator, stimulating discussion, provoking thinking, playing the devil's advocate. The assumption is that only when both approaches are judiciously combined, an integrity training program will have the desired effect of improving the ethical competence of employees. This distinction offers a useful way to conceptualize ethics training, but is still very general. In order to really understand what works in ethics training, more fine-grained dimensions will be necessary.

There are many dimensions along which ethics training can vary, depending on aspects like the background and affiliation of the trainer, the duration and the frequency of the training sessions, or the actual substance as well as the instructional methods used (e.g. Waples et al. 2008). Even minor

variations along these dimensions might significantly impact the effectiveness of the training (O'Leary, 2009). Hence, any comprehensive theory about the impact of ethics training will have to take all dimensions into account. Yet, in the context of this contribution, the focus will be on the latter two: the substance of the training and the instructional methods used.

In terms of substance, one might distinguish between four possible perspectives that could be emphasized in an ethics training (Maesschalck, 2012). First, a training might focus on formal ethics guidelines as formulated in various types of legal instruments, such as laws, codes of ethics, contracts, etc. Second, ethics training could also focus on values. Which values are relevant for the trainees' professional context? What should be done when values conflict with each other, as they do by definition in ethical dilemmas? Is there perhaps a hierarchy among those values? Discussions of values could be addressed both deductively and inductively. As for the former, trainees could be presented with a list of applicable values that are then applied on specific situations. An inductive approach could start with an open discussion where trainees are asked to list relevant values and to develop shared definitions. The training would then also have to address possible discrepancies between those values and the formal values prescribed by the organization. Third, the training could also focus on specific moral philosophical approaches. Of course, the two previously mentioned approaches also imply certain moral philosophical choices, but they remain implicit. Yet, techniques and concepts from moral philosophy might be enlightening, and might help to ask critical questions relevant for practice. There are several ways in which moral philosophy can be used in ethics training. One could develop and use philosophical definitions of terms like 'ethics', 'integrity', 'morality', 'values' etc. One could also explicitly refer to (simplified versions) of important moral philosophies, such as utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics, and the conflicting solutions they offer. Fourth, ethics training might also focus specifically on ethical decision making. These types of training typically attempt to combine elements of the previous three types. They would typically rely on a specific step-by-step decision making model that is either inductively developed during the training or deductively taught at the outset of the training (Cooper, 2012; Maesschalck, 2004a; Karssing, 2001; van Luijk, 2000; Gortner, 1991).

Again, this fourfold distinction can now be applied on the ethics training programs in the pretest-posttest studies mentioned above, with some programs combining several dimensions. First, several of the studied training programs indeed address formal ethics guidelines. O'Leary (2009), for example, describes how the training program studied by him introduces trainees into the code of ethics of the accounting profession. Participants in Ritter's (2006) training are also introduced into "ethical guidelines for decision-making provided by the Academy of Management". The trainings discussed in three other studies (Myyry & Helkama, 2002; Richards, 1999; Gautschi & Jones, 1998) emphasize values and would hence fit in the second category. Myyry and Helkama (2002) for example describe a training where principles of procedural justice and values are introduced so as to stimulate trainees to use them in their discussions of cases. Third, the training programs evaluated by O'Leary (2009), Myyry and Helkama (2002) and Richards (1999) all refer to moral philosophy. Richards (1999), for example, describes an ethics training where participants are required to read a chapter about ethical principles, followed by a lecture and a discussion about those principles and completed with a discussion of cases applying those principles. The fourth perspective is ethical decision making. Among the studies under review, only O'Leary (2009) reports that a step-by-step model for ethical decision making was used in the training he evaluates. Other authors also mention ethical decision making as a training objective, but do not report the use of an explicit ethical decision making model. Again, some studies could not be mentioned in this review as the specific perspectives of the studied training are not discussed (e.g. Van Montfort et al., 2013; Wu, 2003; Loe & Weeks, 2000; Carlson & Burke, 1998; Wynd & Mager, 1989)

Training programs not only vary in the type of substance they offer, but also in the instructional methods they apply. Three frequently used techniques are lectures, open discussions and discussions on specific cases (Maesschalck, 2012). First, in a lecture, the trainer offers a theoretical exposition and participants are expected to listen. The principal objective is to transfer knowledge, although some assume that this technique might also help to train skills. Second, in open discussions, the trainer's role is that of a facilitator and participants are expected to do the talking. In these discussions participants for example search for definitions of morally relevant concepts or engage in other types of

philosophical dialogue (e.g. Kessel, Boers, & Mostert, 2003). Third, ethics training could also involve discussions of actual cases. In this context, 'cases' refers to specific situations where an ethically relevant decision should be made. The actual label used to refer to this case could vary depending on the substance of the course, e.g. 'legal puzzle' or 'ethical dilemma'. The cases could be either hypothetical or prepared by the trainees. While the latter option might increase the training's relevance, it might also be experienced as threatening. For the actual case discussions, there are many specific techniques that could be applied and combined, including role-play and group discussions of the case.

Applying this classification on the training programs described in the pretest-posttest evaluation studies mentioned above, it appears that most programs combine all three instructional methods (Van Montfort et al., 2013; O'Leary, 2009; Ritter, 2006; Myyry & Helkama, 2002; Loe & Weeks, 2000; Richards, 1999; Gautschi & Jones, 1998; Kavathatzopoulos, 1994). Some studies do not contain sufficient information to specify this (Wu, 2003; Carlson & Burke, 1998; Wynd & Mager, 1989).

Of course, the choice for a particular instructional method is not entirely independent from the choice for substantive perspectives. Some substantive perspectives are more naturally combined with some particular instructional methods than others. For a training program that emphasizes formal ethics regulations, for example, one might tend towards lectures, while for ethical decision making training programs, one might tend towards cases. Yet, these links are not as natural as may appear. Formal ethics regulations could also be taught using cases and ethical decision making could also be explained in lectures. With some creativity, any substantive approach might be combined with any of the instructional methods. Moreover, the listed types are not exhaustive, so the possibilities are much richer.

Conclusion

This chapter suggested specific ways to operationalize both the independent and the dependent variables in ethics training research. It showed how these operationalizations can be used to analyze existing empirical studies. In the future, the framework could be a useful source of inspiration to

design ethics training programs and to specify their intended outcomes. It also offers a generic conceptual framework that can be used for the evaluation of very different ethics training programs with various training objectives. Most ambitiously, this framework might, in the long run, offer the language for an empirically grounded theory about the impact of ethics training on ethical competence. Such a theory could then rely on research that shows whether particular types of ethics training are associated with particular aspects of ethical competence. One might, for example, expect that particular types of substance of ethics training are associated with particular subcompetencies. Training programs that focus on formal ethics regulations, for example, might be better at improving the first subcompetence 'rule abidance', while programs emphasizing ethical decision making might be better at stimulating the third and fourth subcompetences. Likewise, the different instructional methods could also differentially impact ethical competence. Traditional lectures, for example, might be more effective at strengthening knowledge, while the use of cases might be better at improving skills. The latter is suggested by a significant literature about the effects of 'active', 'cooperative' and 'problem-based' learning (e.g. Prince, 2004; Slavin 1996). A particularly interesting literature that could inspire such research is the research tradition about the impact of training (usually in the context of secondary or higher education) on what is called 'critical thinking skills.' While the theoretical literature (e.g. Ennis 1989, as used in Abrami et al. 2008, pp. 1105-1106) suggests that instructional methods differentially impact critical thinking, empirical research nuances these expectations. For example, the impact of collaborative learning (Abrami et al. 2008, p. 1119) on critical thinking was found to be relatively minor. It would be interesting to see whether research about the impact of instructional methods on ethical competence would generate similar results.

While this chapter indeed offered two useful building blocks, there is of course significant scope for further expansion of the framework. For example, future research might move on to the next step in the causal chain and look at how an individual's ethical competence relates to her actual behavior on the job ('transfer performance'). Alvarez et al.'s (2004) integrated model on training more generally indeed suggests such a link, but also identifies individual and organizational characteristics that might complicate this impact. In the context of ethics training, relevant individual characteristics could be

age (Waples et al. 2008, pp. 141-142) or an individual's learning style (e.g. Coffield et al. 2004). For the operationalization of organizational characteristics it would be useful to turn to the ethics management literature and its hypotheses about the impact of organizational factors (e.g. leadership, culture, codes) on ethical behavior (e.g. Maesschalck & Bertok 2009).

A research agenda using the framework proposed in this chapter, would offer at least two major benefits. First, it would generate theory-driven and empirically grounded understanding of what works in ethics training and why. It offers a language that allows for cumulative research of very different types of ethics training in significant detail. Second, such a research agenda would also help to understand what is not effective or what might in fact generate the opposite effect of what is intended. As for the latter, the proposed operationalisations of the independent and dependent variables indeed offer a map to conceptualize unintended effects. Suppose, for example, that a particular ethics training program would emphasize the contents of formal ethics guidelines. One would expect that this stimulates the trainees to study the rules and thus increase their level of ethical competence in cell 1. That is not the only possible pathway, however. It is also possible that the training might in fact decrease ethical competence. A training that emphasizes rules might in fact deter trainees to such an extent that it undermines the second subcompetence 'moral sensitivity', which by definition implies that one understands that ethics is more than simply obeying rules. Such a systematic investigation of the unintended and often undesirable side-effects might offer an important and evidence-based complement to the unconditional enthusiasm about ethics training that is not uncommon among actors in what has been labelled the 'ethics industry' (Huberts 2014, p. ix).

Table 1: Ethical competence framework of De Schrijver and Maesschalck (2013, p. 37)

	Knowledge	**Skill**	**Attitudes**
Rule abidance	Law, ethics code, rules and procedures (1)	Applying rules (2)	Importance of rules (3)
Moral sensitivity	Position in the organization and society (4)	Defining a situation as an ethical one Seeing different solutions (5)	Empathy Perspective-taking (6)
Moral reasoning	Moral arguments: - rules - consequences for others - consequences for oneself (7)	Using different moral arguments : - rules - consequences for others - consequences for oneself (8)	Attitude of flexibility: - not only rules - not only consequences for others - not only consequences for oneself (9)
Moral motivation and character	Rules and consequences for others are more important than consequences for oneself (10)	Priority to rules and consequences for others in what you choose to do (11)	Autonomy Ego-strength (12)

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